

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 03926 101624Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8718

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

/USICA WASHDC

SECDEF WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, SY, LE

SUBJ: SYRIA CONTINUES VERBAL ATTACKS ON LEBANESE RIGHTISTS

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN PRESS ON MONDAY, JULY 10, CONTINUES ITS BLUNT
ATTACKS ON KATAEB AND CHAMOUNISTS BUT WITH SOMEWHAT LESS
INTENSITY THAN WAS EVIDENT OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS.
ONLY ONE EDITORIAL IN THE TWO DAILIES APPEARING CONCENTRATES
ON LEBANON WHILE LEAD ARTICLES STRIVE TO SHOW THAT SYRIA'S
POLICIES ENJOY WIDESPREAD SUPPORT AMONG THE LEBANESE IN
FACE OF CONTINUING RIGHTIST "TERRORISM." OVERALL TNE IS
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 03926 101624Z

NOT ONE OF IMMINENT CRISIS. PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD ATTEMPTS TO
REASSURE SYRIA'S CHRISTIANS WHILE SEVERAL SENIOR REGIME
MILITARY PERSONALITIES SEEM TO GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO PROJECT
IMAGE THAT NO MILITARY CONFRONTATION EXPECTED. END WUMMARY.

2. SYRIAN PRESS JULY 10 BANNERED IMPROVEMENT IN BEIRUT'S
SECURITY SITUATION AND ADHERENCE OF ADF TO CEASE-FIRE ORDERS

IN FACE OF RIGHTIST "PROVOCATIONS," AL-BAATH HEADLINED:
"COMMAND OF ADF: SECURITY SITUATION IS ENCOURAGING. PHALANGIST
AND CHAMOUNIST GANGS CONTINUE THEIR TERROR AGAINST THE
LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY. ADF ABIDED BY ORDERS AND DID NOT
RESPOND TO PROVOCATIONS. LEBANESE POLITICIANS CONTINUE TO
DENOUNCE FORCES FOR PARTITION." THE ACCOMPANYING ARTICLE
ALMOST REPEATS THE HEADLINE VERBATIM AND THEN CATALOGUES
ALLEGED LEBANESE SUPPORT FOR SYRIAN ACTIONS. SEPARATE
ARTICLES DEAL WITH TELEGRAM OF SUPPORT PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD
RECEIVED FROM THE LEBANESE AKKAR REGION AND ARAB PRESS
CRITICISM OF LEBANESE RIGHTISTS.

3. ONLY EDITORIAL APPEARING ON SUBJECT IS ON INSIDE PAGES
OF AL-BAATH BY MUHAMMAD MANSOUR. HE REITERATES SYRIA'S GOOD
INTENTIONS IN LEBANON AND DENOUNCES PHALANGE AND CHAMOUNISTS.
EXTREME SENSITIVITY IS EVIDENCE TO US ATTEMPTS AT "INTER-
NATIONALIZATION" OF THE CRISIS WHICH IS VIEWED AS ONE OF
THE STRATEGIES RIGHTISTS PURSUING TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS.
SPECIFICALLY, MANSOUR ARGUES THAT SYRIA WANTS STABILITY
IN LEBANON BECAUSE IT IS THE COUNTRY MOST AFFECTED BY
EVENTS THERE AND BECAUSE IT WISHES TO CONCENTRATE ITS ENERGIES
ON THE "LIBERATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES." RIGHTISTS
ARE ACCUSED OF WORKING TO THWART SARKIS FROM GOVERNING
THE COUNTRY AND OF INTERNATIONALIZING THE CRISIS. MANSOUR
BOASTS IN REGARD TO THE LATTER THAT, "SYRIA'S POSITION AND
THE APPROACH WHICH SHE FOLLOWED IN DEALING WITH ALL PARTIES
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PAGE 03 DAMASC 03926 101624Z

MADE THE CONSPIRATORS MISS THE OPPORTUNITY...IN ANY CASE,
IT IS BEST FOR THE PHALANGIST AND CHAMOUNIST GANGS TO
PERCEIVE FULLY THAT THEIR DREAMS HAVE VANISHED AND THAT
LEBANON SHALL REMAIN UNITED..."

4. JULY 9 PRESS GAVE PROMINENT ATTENTION TO SERIES OF
MEETINGS ASSAD HELD PREVIOUS DAY WITH THE KUWAITI FOREIGN
MINISTER, THE DAMASCUS-BASED GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCH, AND
JORDANIAN PM BADRAN. PATRIARCH GOT TOP BILLING IN BOTH
PAPERS WHICH ALSO RAN QUOTE FROM HIS GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH
COLLEAGUE PRAISING SYRIA'S ROLE IN LEBANON. DAMASCUS
DOMESTIC SERVICE RAN COMMENTARY SCORNING ISRAELI
ATTEMPTS TO ACT AS DEFENDER OF CHRISTIANS IN VIEW OF ITS
HISTORY. THIS APPEARS TO BE CLEAR SIGNAL TO SYRIA'S
PROMINENT BUT POLITICALLY WEAK CHRISTIAN MINORITY THAT
SYRIA'S FIGHT IS NOT WITH THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS BUT
WITH SEVERAL FACTIONS CLAIMING TO REPRESENT THE CHRISTIANS.

5. MEANWHILE, NO ATMOSPHERE OF IMMINENT CRISIS IS EVIDENT
HERE. PEOPLE GO ABOUT THEIR NORMAL BUSINESS AND WHILE
LEBANON IS A TOPIC OF CONCERNED CONVERSATION FEW SEEM TO BE
EXPECTING A WAR. PROMINENT REGIME MILITARY FIGURES WOULD

SEEN TO REFLECT THIS MOOD--PERHAPS, INTENTIONALLY
RIF'AT AL-ASSAD EVEINGINGJULY 7 SHOWED UP AT MERIDIEN SUMMER
BARBECUE WITH A LARGE ENTOURAGE AND STAYED TO WATCH THE LATE
NIGHT ENTERTAINMENT AND LUNCHEDED AT THE NEWLY OPENED SHERATON
JULY 10. ON JULY 8, A SMILING AND APPARENTLY RELAXED, MINDEF
MUSTAPHA TLASS WAS SEEN AT THE ANDALOUS SWIMMING CLUB, WHICH
BASICALLY SERVES THE FOREIGN COMMUNITY HERE, JOKING AND
PLAYING CARDS WITH AN ATTRACTIVE GROUP OF YOUNG LADIES.
THUS, ISRAELI THREATS MAY BE PERCEIVED FOR NOW AS LUSTER
OR ELSE SYRIAN MILITARY WISHES TO PROJECT THE IMAGE THAT
ALL IS WELL.
PELLETREAU

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